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## RELIC HUNTING ON THE MOHAWK.

BY S. L. FREY.

IN these latter days there has been a great impetus given to the study of archæology, and many astonishing discoveries have been made by men digging in the dust and rubbish of the past.

We have all been interested in the stories of Schliemann and Di Cesnola, and have looked with much curiosity upon the valuable treasures they have unearthed. Men like John Evans and Boucher de Perthes have, by their study of the implements of the Stone Age, thrown a flood of light upon the pre-historic times of Europe, and the controversy concerning the age of man upon the earth, which now waxes so hot, will doubtless eventuate in approximately determining that question.

The golden wonders of Mycenæ and the bones of Agamemnon, "King of Men," are certainly worth digging for; terra-cottas from Cypress, and statues from Olympia, and Babylonian tablets take us back into the far past, and rough flints from the caves and gravel beds may lead us to look upon the palæolithic man as a brother.

But while everybody has heard of these strange discoveries in the "far countries," very few know anything about the antiquities of our own country, or of the relics of the Stone Age that lie scattered over the fields all about us.

I have been so much interested myself in the relics left by the old Mohawk Indians, that I trust it may not be without interest to the readers of this magazine if I describe a few of the things picked up, from time to time, upon their old village sites. The relics of all peoples are interesting as illustrating the manner in which they have groped their way up from lower depths of savagism, and valuable for comparison with objects of similar types from other parts of the world.

The similarity that exists among the relics of all Stone Age peoples is a fact that becomes apparent at once to an observer. It is interesting and surprising, and shows that they have all traveled the same hard road, and out of their necessities have wrought out many similar inventions.

The traveler of to-day, as he passes through the beautiful Mohawk valley, has little to remind him of the former savage owners of the soil, who, long before the advent of the Whites,

built their fortified towns on commanding hills, and paddled their elm-bark canoes on the river that bears their name. The insane love of war and conquest that possessed them, their cruelty and ferocity, for long ages made a very pandemonium of the valley that is now so peaceful and prosperous. At the head of the Five Nations, their name indeed "lead all the rest." They kept back the advancing Dutch and English; they were an almost impassable barrier to all French colonizing and proselyting among the cognate tribes in Canada, and red and white together, from Illinois to Acadia, trembled and fled at the cry of "a Mohawk! a Mohawk!"

The Five Nations, or Iroquois, called themselves the Konoshioni, or People of the Long House. The Mohawk valley was the eastern door, and the Mohawk tribe held it. While much has been written, from the time of DeWitt Clinton to the present, about the antiquities of the other tribes of the Confederacy, very little has been said or is known about the relics of the Mohawks. All that are described and illustrated in this article have been found on what are presumably sites of old Mohawk villages. These sites naturally divide themselves into two classes; the first, those unmistakably occupied during the Stone Age proper, where are found only relics of stone, and clay, and bone; and second, sites where relics of a mixed character appear, consisting of similar relics to those of the first period in connection with articles introduced by the whites after the discovery.

Village sites that can be certainly identified as belonging to the time previous to the introduction of metals are few; a diligent and careful search may discover more than are now known, but at present I know of but two. The first of these was evidently a place where the rough material was quarried and stone implements manufactured, as there are innumerable flakes and flint chips, broken and unfinished weapons and tools, and many arrow heads, etc., scattered over a surface of several hundred acres in extent. The other site is one of peculiar interest; as it has never been cultivated, and is covered with a pine forest, everything is undisturbed and is just as it was when it was deserted by the savages. It is a very Kjökken-Mödding, where heaps of the refuse lie untouched. Here in piles of ashes and clam shells are found innumerable fragments of pottery, broken bones of animals, stone and bone implements, deers' horns, bears' and beavers'

teeth, and many other evidences of savage life. It is upon a point of land where two ravines meet, was evidently palisaded, and must have been an impregnable fortress when the only weapons were bows and arrows.

The labor that was required to surround such an extensive village must have been immense, especially when we remember that only axes of stone were used, similar to Fig. 1. These "celts" or hand axes are found the world over; this one is of a compact hard kind of green stone, has a fine cutting edge and is polished over its entire surface. These axes are called "thunderbolts" by the common people of many widely separated nations. Mr. John Evans, in his great work on the "Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain," gives much interesting and curious lore in regard to this and similar superstitions. I have heard the same name applied to these ancient tools here in the Mohawk valley. Very poor tools we should call them, but in the hands of a savage proved wonderfully effective for cutting down trees and hollowing out canoes when used in connection with fire.

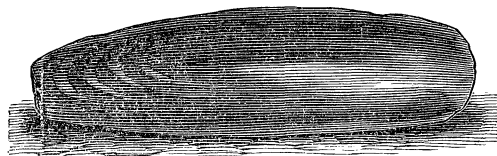


FIG. 1.—Celt.

In Fig. 2 is presented a side and front view of a stone carving carefully and skillfully cut out of a hard black stone; it seems to have been worn as an ornament or a charm, grooves being cut round it; as a specimen of the carving of a people having no iron tools it is certainly remarkable. The Mohawks were divided into three clans, the

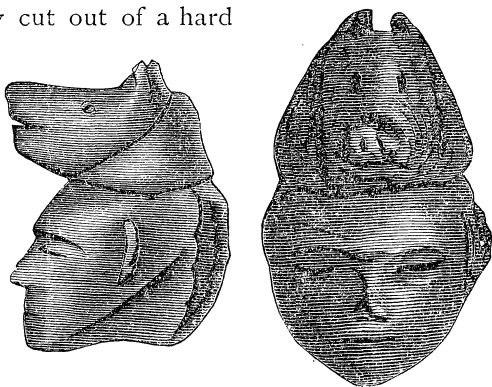


FIG. 2.—Side and front view of Totem—Indian and Bear.  
(full size.)

turtle, the wolf and the bear, and possibly the Indian who owned this may have been of the bear genus, and this may have been his "totem."

Upon the site previously referred to, fragments of pottery similar to Figs. 3 to 7 are found.

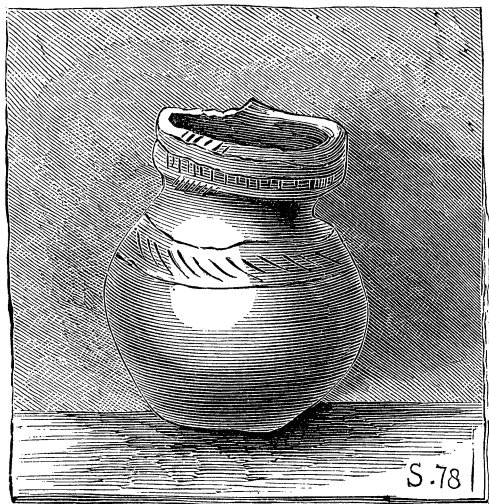


FIG. 3.—Mohawk Jar.

It is unglazed and very hard, and seems to be made of clay and pounded shell or stone. The jars were of all sizes, round on the bottom, but made with a rim so that they could be suspended with a cord or strip of bark. The decoration consists of an exceedingly diverse arrangement of incised lines and dots, and it would appear from the

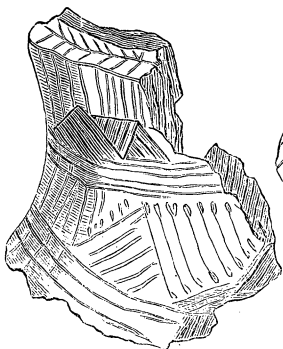


FIG. 4.

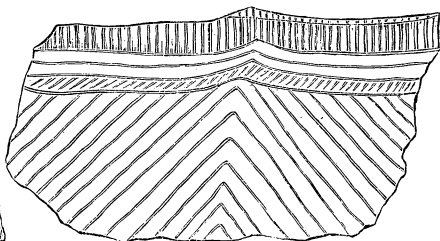


FIG. 5.

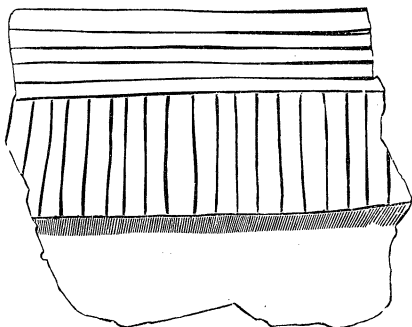


FIG. 6.

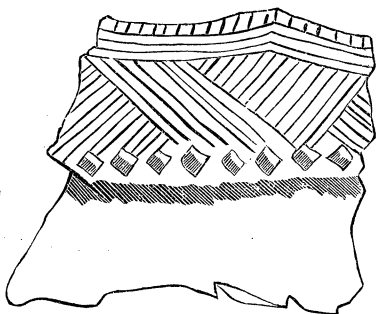


FIG. 7.

similarity of the shape and ornamentation that there were regular

potters who manufactured all that were used by the village, and they seem to have had considerable skill in the plastic art, for not only is the pottery very creditable, but they also worked clay into other forms, showing great ingenuity in makings pipes, the bowls of which are frequently in the form of a bird or mammal, and these always being very true to nature. Some of these are shown in the engravings which fail, however, to give the spirit of the

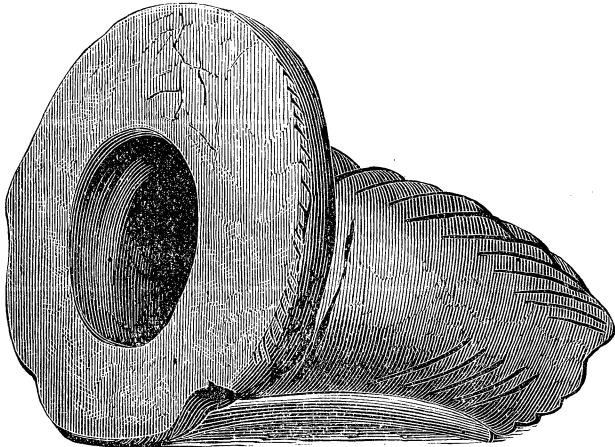


FIG. 8.—Fragment of Pottery Pipe.

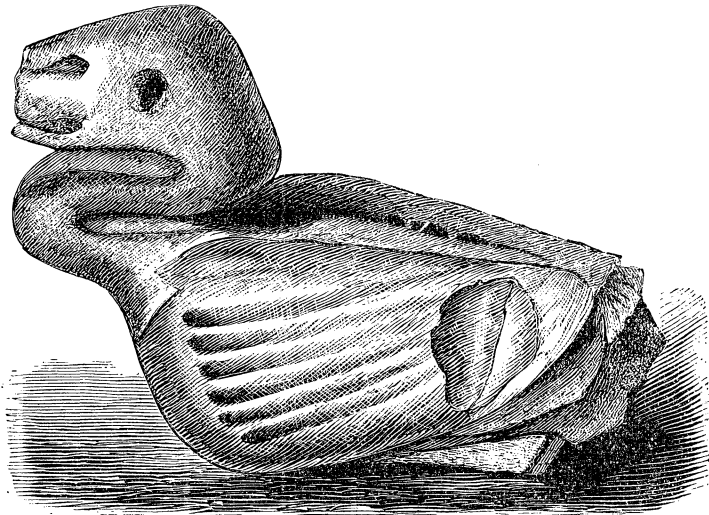


FIG. 9.—Fragment of Pottery Pipe.

originals. Fig. 9 is the fragment of a pipe and Fig. 10 and 11 are

samples of birds and animals, rude in style to be sure, but by no means inferior to similar terra-cottas from Mycenæ and Cyprus.

Among Aboriginal relics, bone implements are much more rare than those of stone, for

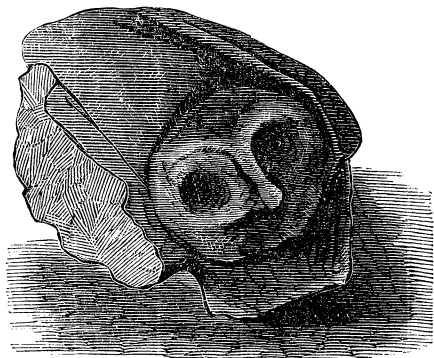


FIG. 10.—Owl.

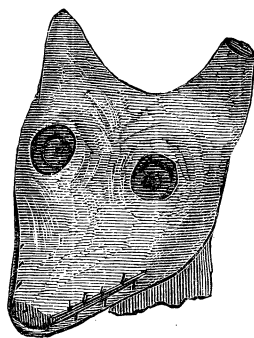


FIG. 11.—Fox.

when exposed to the weather they are soon destroyed, and the

sites of villages that are uncleared and uncultivated, and where these bone tools alone

are found, are very few. Those that are found here, of which Figs. 14, 15 and 16 are samples, are for the most part awls or piercing implements, and are well made and highly polished; they have been worked out of hard compact bones,

and scraped down with great labor. Among the many broken bones that are found, are some which show the grooves made by the stone saws in cutting out these tools.



FIG. 15.

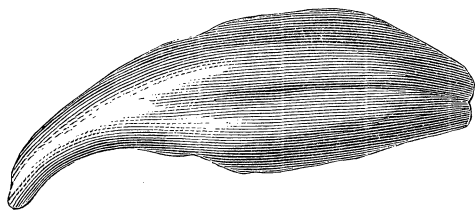


FIG. 12.—Bear's Tooth.

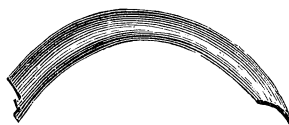


FIG. 13.—Beaver's Tooth.

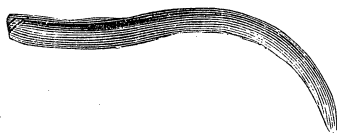


FIG. 14.

The bones of animals, like those in similar situations in other countries, are all split and broken to extract the marrow, and the teeth and jaws of bears, and deer, and beaver are as well preserved as though buried yesterday. Many necklace bones like Fig. 17, are found which show a great deal of laborious scraping.

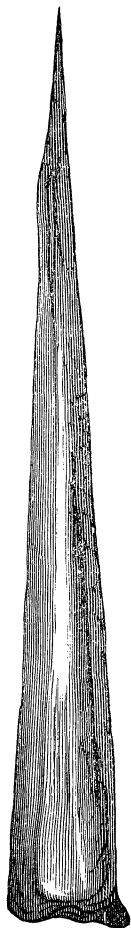


FIG. 16.

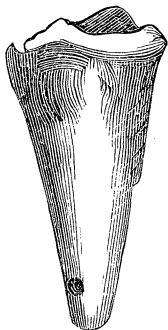


FIG. 17.—Necklace bone.



FIG. 18.



FIG. 19.



FIG. 20.

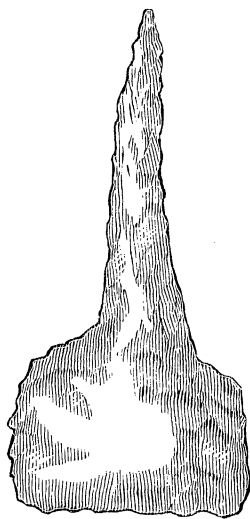


FIG. 24.

Necklaces of this kind were made by some of the tribes of the finger bones of their enemies, the squaws usually commencing the torture of a prisoner by sawing off the forefingers with a clam shell.

Upon all the village sites, upon the surface of the fields, and in the graves, the usual forms of stone implements are found, those



that are rough and chipped predominating largely over those that are ground and polished. Indeed one is greatly impressed with the remarkable similarity that exists between these rough stone implements and the palæolithic flints from the caves and gravel beds of Europe, and it would seem to be no difficult task to duplicate in a great measure from the surface finds, the engravings of these implements as given in the European archæological works on the subject. Many of those found here resemble the cave and gravel implements much more closely than any shown in this article.

Arrow heads are of many forms, and are made of various kinds



FIG. 21.

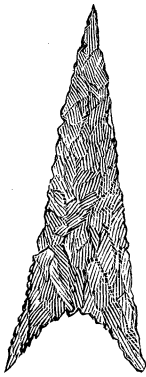


FIG. 23.

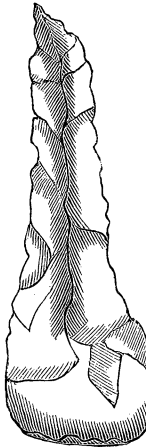


FIG. 25.



FIG. 27.



FIG. 22.

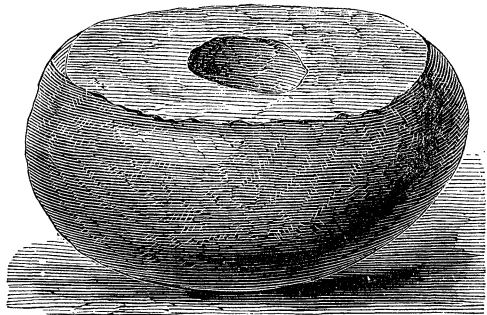


FIG. 26.—Hammer Stone.

of hornstone, and slate, and spar. Some of them are exceedingly rough, while others are flaked with great skill and are beautiful specimens of workmanship. All the forms of flint

implements such as knives, scrapers, borers, drills and others of unknown or not obvious uses, are abundant. Figs. 28 to 30 show a few of these latter forms.

The foregoing are specimens of what the Mohawks used during their Stone Age, but relics are abundant that were brought in at a very early day by the whites. Such are beads of various kinds, pipes and nondescript fragments of cop-

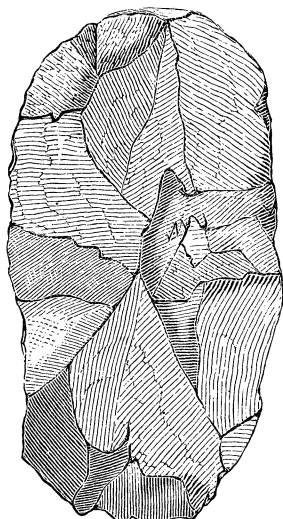


FIG. 28.

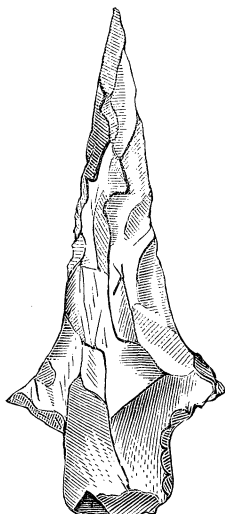


FIG. 30.



FIG. 29.

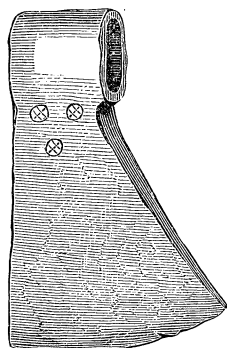


FIG. 31.—Trade Axe.

per, iron and lead, notable among which are the axes, Fig. 31, which although rude and clumsy in the extreme, were yet a great acquisition to men who had for generations, with infinite labor, wrought axes out of the flinty rock. These trade axes probably began to supersede those of stone previous to the year 1600, for Champlain in his expedition against the Mohawks in 1609 speaks of them as cutting down trees "with villainous axes of stone, and also of iron, which latter they had captured from their enemies;" their enemies were either the Indians of Canada, who obtained iron from the French as early as 1535, or of those southern tribes with whom the Mohawks were always at war.

In conclusion, I feel how impossible it is to do justice to this subject in so small a space. The extent of it can be imagined from the fact that the few forms here shown are from a collection of several thousand specimens. It is sufficient, however, to throw some light upon the manner of life and the progress of a people who filled so conspicuous a place in history at a time when European nations were struggling to gain a foothold in this western wilderness.